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Notes from the Samaritan

JAMES A. MONTGOMERY

PHILADELPHIA DIVINITY SCHOOL

I. A Nineteenth Century Witness to the Pronunciation of YHWH

AMONG the various Hellenistic traditions of the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, the Samaritan tradition has been preserved by Theodoret, who transliterates the pronunciation by 'Iaβε or 'Iaβaī.¹ From the Third Epistle of the Samaritans to Ludolf, 1689 A.D., it appears, in a passage that is unfortunately most obscure, that the Samaritans of that day still possessed the pronunciation of YHWH.² Also the constant use of YHWH in the liturgy shows that there was none of the fear of writing it which developed among the Jews. It is, however, always pronounced either *shema*, "the Name," or, in some cases, *elohim*.

But it has been almost entirely overlooked that there exists still later evidence for the Samaritan preservation of the true pronunciation. The French scholars who carried on a correspondence with the Samaritans in the first decades of the nineteenth century tried in vain to obtain a direct answer to their query concerning the pronunciation of the divine name, but in the Epistle addressed to de Sacy in 1820 the word appears, quite accidentally as it seems, spelt

¹ *Quaest. in Exod.* xv (ed. Migne, lxxx. 244): 'Iaβε ; *Haereticarum fabularum compendium*, v. 3 (Migne, lxxxiii. 460): 'Iaβaī.

² See de Sacy, "Epistola Samaritana tertia ad I. Ludolfum," in Eichhorn's *Repertorium für biblische und morgenländische Litteratur*, xiii (1783), p. 286, and the editor's note thereto. See further on this obscure passage Dietrich, in his correspondence with Delitzsch, in *ZATW*, iii. p. 286, who argues that the text represents the pronunciation as Yahû.

and vocalized in Arabic characters as *يَهْوَه*.³ The passage, which I give below, is obscure, and de Sacy, who remarks, "Je copie exactement l'original, sans deviner ce que cela veut dire," makes no note of this full spelling of the Tetragrammaton. So far as I know the only scholar who has observed the value of this spelling is Bargès, in his *Les Samaritains de Naplouse*, 1855, pp. 62, 73.

This Arabic representation of the pronunciation thus gives the word either as *Yahwa* or *Yahwe*, the final *fetha* allowing either vowel in the last syllable. Now Kautzsch has argued⁴ that the rhyming of YHWH in the Samaritan hymns proves that the pronunciation is *Yahwe*. This is indeed true of the two passages he cites from Heidenheim, *Bibliotheca Samaritana*, ii. pp. 25, 54, in both of which YHWH rhymes with words ending in *segol*; but in all the remaining cases of the rhyming of YHWH in the same collection of liturgical pieces, it rhymes with words terminating in *a*. So p. 48, top; p. 85, *bis*; p. 112; pp. 198-199, where YHWH occurs in the last line of nine successive quatrains all rhyming in *a*. Thus the final words of one of these quatrains are: *ידוה, צומה, קיעמה, עצומה*. These instances thus contradict Kautzsch's conclusion. In any case Samaritan rhyme is too arbitrary for this argument to be conclusive. There are instances where in order to make a rhyme for the eye the writer has deliberately transposed consonants, and it seems from some cases that the poet is quite content to end in *-מה* or *-יה*, without regard to the exact color of the vowel. Further, if YHWH is in popular use only a cryptogram for the pronunciation *shema*, all this evidence has no value either way. It can only be said that the greater number of these instances favor the pronunciation *Yahwa* as against *Yahwe*.⁵

³ De Sacy, "Correspondance des Samaritains," in *Notices et Extraits des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Roi*, xii (1831), p. 134, translation, p. 152.

⁴ *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1886, col. 223.

⁵ But conclusive evidence on this question was given by Prof. N. Schmidt in the discussion of the present paper at the meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. He said that he had learned orally from

The Arabic text of the passage above referred to, which is in answer to the request of the Europeans that the Samaritans prove their priestly pedigree, is as follows:—

فقوى تعجبنا من هذه المسئلة بان لا يسال من هذه المسائل
سوى جماعتنا حتى يبقى عندهم التكية والحقيقة على الكوتة
يَهْوَة يعمره ويجمعهم فى خير امين

De Sacy translates: “Notre surprise a été d’autant plus grande qu’il n’y a que des gens de notre nation qui puissent faire une semblable demande [several words left untranslated]. Que Jéhova leur accorde une longue vie, et les réunisse dans un état heureux ! Amen.” Bargès repeats de Sacy’s translation as far as “demande,” and then proceeds: “afin que le pontificat [reading الكهنوت] subsiste toujours parmi eux et se maintienne légitime. Que Jéhova,” etc. The passage does not make much sense in respect to the context. It is to be noticed that the vocalized form of YHWH occurs in a popular formula of benediction.

II. The Root פָּרַט, Amos 6⁵

This *hapax legomenon* of the Old Testament has been variously interpreted. The older Jewish scholars explained it as meaning ‘to divide words,’ hence ‘to sing,’ an interpretation which is adopted by our current English versions. In the Arabic, according to Abu’l Walid,⁶ it may have the meaning ‘to improvise.’ Hence many modern interpreters interpret it *in malo sensu*, ‘to sing idle songs,’ ‘phantasieren,’ etc. But the occurrence of the word in a Samaritan Hebrew hymn contributes to its understanding. The verb is found in a hymn published by Heidenheim in his *Bibliotheca Samaritana*, ii. No. ci. line 14, where the line containing the word reads:—

אל נתן לו תשבחן. אל נפרט לו כל שיראן. אל נרים לו הצבען.
אל נסי הנצחן;

the son of the Samaritan high priest, whom he had met in the preceding winter in Jerusalem, that the Samaritans pronounce the name either as Yahwa or Yahû.

⁶ See Gesenius, *Handwörterbuch* ¹⁴, s.v.

i.e. "God — let us give to him praise ; God — let us sing to him all songs ; God — let us raise to him shouts ; God — let us lift to him pæans." The context shows that פִּרְט is synonymous with verbs of singing, and in this simple sense the verb is doubtless to be understood in Amos. In v.²¹ of the same hymn we find שִׁירָאן נִפְרֵשׁ. Both verbs פִּרְט and שִׁירָאן doubtless mean to mark out the words of the song according to the time, just as the Jewish exegetes understood פִּרְט.

III. מַלְמֵם in the Samaritan Targum to Gen. 1¹

In the Samaritan Targum to Gen. 1¹ the Hebrew בָּרָא is rendered, in many manuscripts, though not all, and in all printed editions, by מַלְמֵם. It does not occur again in the Targum, בָּרָא being represented by several other roots. It is found in the Liturgy, Heidenheim, *Bibliotheca Samaritana*, ii. No. xcvi. stanza 1, line 3, and No. ci. line 15. The word has so far defied explanation. Kohn, agreeing with Petermann, at first connected it with the root צַלַם, but later gave up the problem as hopeless.⁷ Nöldeke would explain it from the Arabic طَلَسَم, derived from the Greek τέλεσμα⁸; but the idea of magic which this scholar finds in the word is utterly incongruous with the Samaritan theology.

I suggest that מַלְמֵם is simply a transliteration of the Greek ἐθεμελίωσε, which appears frequently in the LXX to denote the creative act; *e.g.* Ps. 101 (102)²⁶: κατ' ἀρχὰς τῆν γῆν σύ, κύριε, ἐθεμελίωσας; Prov. 3¹⁹. The introduction of so absurd a barbarism would then be due to the desire of an editor of the Targum to obtain a unique technical word for the primal act of creation; he took the Greek word bodily over from some well-known passage like those in the LXX, or, if we may believe in its existence, from the Samaritikon (the Samaritan Greek translation) to Gen. 1¹. The metathesis between the *t* and *l* assumed by this theory often appears where

⁷ Kohn, *Samaritanische Studien*, p. 99; "Zur Sprache, Litteratur und Dogmatik der Samaritaner," pp. 163, 192; "Zur neuesten Litteratur über die Samaritaner," *ZDMG*, xxxix. p. 204.

⁸ In Geiger's *Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben*, vi. p. 209.

ל is concerned in pure Semitic forms, and is common in cases of textual corruption. In the first of the liturgical passages referred to above the reading is אַמְלָמִם, where the א then transliterates the initial Greek ε. The intimate relation of the Samaritan Targum to the Alexandrine versions is well known; in the first chapter of Genesis in the former several Greek words have been taken over bodily. Further, the actual transliteration of a complete verbal form of the Greek has its analogy in Rabbinic literature; thus שׁוֹלְמִיָּסִין for ἐτόλμῃσεν, occurring several times in Rabbinic.⁹

IV. The "Little Ones" of the Gospels

In several of the sayings of Jesus a caution or precept is given with regard to "one of these little ones," Mt. 10⁴², 18^{6. 10. 14}; Mk. 9⁴²; Lk. 17². In Mt. 18 these logia are introduced by the symbolical action in which Jesus takes a little child and sets him in the midst as the text for his discourse. Hence, in this chapter at least, the most common interpretation has been to understand the "little ones" of children, as in the famous saying: "See that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you that their angels in heaven do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." But it has sometimes been held¹⁰ that by this term are intended the unlearned, the *am-ha-aretz*, or "idiots," of Jewish society, although such a technical use of the word has not been instanced in Jewish literature. An instance of this technical use occurs in the Samaritan Liturgy.¹¹ The passage reads: וּבֶן אֶפְשֵׁט עֲדָרִי (= חֲדָרִי) עַד לֹא יֹאמְרוּ הַזִּקְנִים וְהַזִּידִיעִים יִשְׁמְחוּ בּוֹ וְיִדְעוּ בְּאִיקְרִי (= עִיקְרִי) "And thus I will set forth the mysteries, in order that the little ones may not say, This is all a lie, and that the learned may rejoice therein, and have knowledge of the principles." The word in the Samaritan is the same as that with which the Syriac translates the "little ones" of the Gospels. In this passage, then, "the little ones" are identical with the

⁹ See Jastrow, *Dictionary*, s.v.

¹⁰ Bousset, *Religion des Judentums*, p. 166 f.

¹¹ Heidenheim, *Bibliotheca Samaritana*, ii. p. 92, bottom.

am-ha-aretz of Judaism. The contrast presented in this passage is almost verbally the same as that which Jesus makes in Mt. 11²⁵ between "wise and prudent" and "babes."¹²

V. Angels Attendant at the Sacrifices

Several times in the Samaritan Liturgy reference is made to the presence of the angels, including the cherubim, at the sacrifices; *e.g.* Heidenheim, *Bibliotheca Samaritana*, ii. p. 66, top; p. 116, line 28; p. 117, line 27. They touch, or kiss, the sacrifices, and appear in mystic vision to the worshippers, especially at the priestly blessing. The like thought is common in early Christian mysticism concerning the Eucharist, as, for instance, John Chrysostom, *De sacerdote*, vi. 4, where it is said that at the celebration of the Eucharist "angels stand about the priest," and that even the vision of them has sometimes been seen. As for the Samaritan idea, it is to be observed that Gerizim, where all sacrifices are performed, is regarded as the place blessed by the presence of the invisible hosts of heaven. It may be queried whether the Christian mystical notion has not a Jewish basis.

¹² *Νῆπιος* is repeatedly used in the New Testament in a like semitechnical sense: Mt. 11²⁵; Lk. 10²¹; Rom. 2²⁰; 1 Cor. 3¹.